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RHMFIS/CDR USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE//J2/J5/HSE// PRIORITY
RHMFIS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL//CCJ3-E/CCJ5-E// PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC//J5/RUE// PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L YEREVAN 000125

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/19/2019

TAGS: MOPS PREL MARR AF AM

SUBJECT: GOAM OFFERS FORCE MAJEURE LANDING RIGHTS FOR
AFGHANISTAN FLIGHTS; READY TO DISCUSS OTHER PROPOSALS

Classified By: Amb. Marie L. Yovanovitch, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶11. (C) On February 20, Defense Minister Ohanian met with Ambassador and Defense Attaché. Noting the Kyrgyz parliamentary decision to terminate access to Manas Air Force Base and that the U.S. was likely looking for alternative routes to Afghanistan, Ohanian said Armenia would like to offer assistance. He stated that, in case of force majeure, Armenia was prepared to provide emergency access for troops and cargo shipments, as well as emergency medical support in Armenia. Ohanian commented that Armenia's geographical position did not allow Armenia to fully replace the line of communication to Afghanistan, but Armenia was nevertheless prepared to contribute to U.S. efforts in Afghanistan.

¶12. (C) Ohanian said that the country's senior leadership had approved this proposal, and that the GOAM was prepared to discuss the offer if it was helpful to the USG. Following the meeting, Defense Policy Director, Colonel Tonoyan, further clarified that the GOAM would be prepared to also discuss any other USG proposals for how Armenia could be helpful with regard to Afghanistan and that the President himself had approved the proposal that Ohanian outlined. It is likely that Ambassador Markarian will be instructed to provide the same offer in Washington.

¶13. (C) COMMENT: We do not know whether this offer is useful to the U.S. military. We also don't know whether there are other services that Armenia could provide with respect to Afghanistan, but we got a very clear signal that Armenia is open to discussing any other proposals the USG might have. This is a big step for cautious Armenia, a Russian ally. We're not sure what the behind-the-scenes maneuvering were to get to this proposal, but Armenia's closeness to Russia may give the GOAM some latitude in its dealings with the U.S. Ohanian said the GOAM, which is working with both Germany and the Kansas State National Guard on possible troop deployments to Afghanistan, wants to do its part provide for stability in Afghanistan. It is also evident that Armenia is trying to significantly bump up the mil-to-mil relationship with the United States.

YOVANOVITCH